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RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING 0835
RUEHHI/AMEMBASSY HANOI 1051
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RUEHUM/AMEMBASSY ULAANBAATAR 0448
RUEHGP/AMEMBASSY SINGAPORE 7112
RUEHGH/AMCONSUL SHANGHAI 0292
RUEHGZ/AMCONSUL GUANGZHOU 1350
RUEHNH/AMCONSUL NAHA 7584
RUEHOK/AMCONSUL OSAKA KOBE 8853
RUEHCN/AMCONSUL CHENGDU 0147
RUEHSH/AMCONSUL SHENYANG 0573
RUEHFK/AMCONSUL FUKUOKA 5188
RUEHKSO/AMCONSUL SAPPORO 5818
RUEHIN/AIT TAIPEI 6826
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 TOKYO 005670

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SUBJECT: PM FUKUDA'S VISIT TO CHINA

Classified By: CDA Joseph R. Donovan; Reasons: 1.4 (b/d)

¶1. (C) Summary: Prime Minister Yasuo Fukuda's 27-30 December visit to China is expected to produce positive visuals, but little in terms of substantive deliverables. PM Fukuda will highlight the common cultural and economic interests between the two countries, visiting a Japanese factory in Tianjin and the birthplace of Confucius. Eleventh hour efforts to secure agreement on the East China Sea did not succeed, according to MOFA officials. The China trip should provide a welcome respite for the Prime Minister, whose poll numbers have suffered sharp declines due to ongoing scandal investigations and the government's continued failure to account for tens of millions of missing pension records. The visit should give the Prime Minister an opportunity to showcase his diplomatic talents and set a positive tone for President Hu Jintao's expected visit to Tokyo next April. End Summary.

Fukuda in China

¶2. (C) Prime Minister Yasuo Fukuda departed December 27 for a long anticipated four-day visit to China, where he will meet with PRC leaders, visit Japanese companies in Tianjin, and pay respects at the birthplace of Confucius in Qufu. MOFA Foreign Policy Bureau Policy Coordination Division Director Nobukatsu Kanehara said the visit will mark the full return to normalcy in Japan-China relations after an extended period of tensions created by former PM Junichiro Koizumi's visits to Yasukuni Shrine. Kanehara credited former Prime Minister Shinzo Abe with putting the relationship back on track with his visit to China shortly after taking office. Abe's willingness to host Premier Wen Jiabao over two days in Tokyo in April, for example, contributed to the PRC's agreement to offer the same enhanced protocol treatment for Fukuda in Beijing.

¶3. (C) Kanehara said that while the atmospherics are all positive, there would not be any major breakthroughs during the visit. Eleventh-hour attempts by Deputy Foreign Minister Mitoji Yabunaka to secure Chinese agreement on progress over

the East China Sea issue did not bear fruit, he noted. Kanehara stated that there may be discussion on cooperative work on disposing WWII-era Japanese chemical weapons in the Nanjing area, but the two sides are still far away from a work plan for the much larger chemical weapons stockpiles in the northeast of the country.

¶4. (C) Kanehara said that Fukuda does plan to caution Chinese leaders against over-reacting to events in Taiwan in the lead-up to the presidential election. He noted that the Chinese have expressed disappointment over Tokyo's unwillingness to publicly pressure Taiwan over the planned referendum on UN membership.

Asian Values Diplomacy

¶5. (C) Chinese embassy Poloff Chen Zhiwen offered a similar assessment of the Fukuda trip. She asserted that Fukuda's visit to Confucius' birthplace will be welcomed by the public in China as a gesture of recognition of the common Asian culture shared between Japan and China. Chen noted that the Chinese were uncomfortable with former PM Abe's focus on "values diplomacy," which put Japan and China in different camps. Chen added that the Fukuda trip should set a positive tone for the expected visit by President Hu Jintao to Tokyo next April.

Comment: Welcome Distraction

¶6. (C) Prime Minister Fukuda's visit comes at a useful time politically. The ongoing investigation into corruption at

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the Ministry of Defense (MOD) and lingering public anger over the government's inability to fully account for millions of missing pension records have led to double-digit drops in the Cabinet's polling numbers. Even without a substantive breakthrough, the China trip offers an opportunity to showcase Fukuda's skills as a statesman and Asia policy hand.
DONOVAN